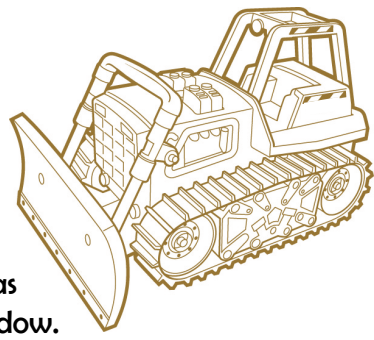


# Minimizing clearing



## Why minimize clearing?

Land cleared for construction produces as much as 2,000 times more sediment than a forest or meadow.

In addition to its value for preventing erosion, minimizing clearing preserves forest, wildlife habitat and riparian corridors.

## Techniques

Before construction begins, the “limits of disturbance” should be clearly marked, using flags or fencing (e.g., silt fencing). Some areas, such as stream buffers, forest conservation areas, wetlands, highly erodible soils, steep slopes, environmental features and stormwater infiltration areas should never be cleared.

Restricting clearing to the areas where it is absolutely necessary for construction access, buildings, roads and utilities can save up to \$5,000 per acre on earthwork and erosion and sediment controls.

## Limitations and challenges

The greatest challenge to minimizing clearing is the planning required throughout design and construction. Areas that should not be cleared should be clearly marked on a site plan and in the field.

On small sites, minimizing clearing is more difficult because a large percentage of the site may be reserved for construction staging or equipment storage. On sites with steep slopes, retaining walls and other expensive construction techniques will be needed to successfully minimize clearing.

## Innovations and improvements

A standard 25 foot wide clearing limit can be reduced to just 10 to 15 feet by keeping construction equipment on one side of the trench and depositing spoils on the same side. Lay a geotextile fabric across the top of the spoil area prior to starting excavation in order to preserve existing vegetation and help avoid excessive compaction of the native soils by the construction equipment. Once the trench is backfilled and the fabric removed, only the excavated portion of the trench must be re-vegetated.

# Fast Facts - Minimizing clearing

**Approximate Cost:** No additional construction cost

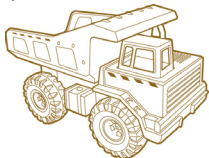
Effectiveness	Low	Mod	High
Erosion/Sediment Control			X
Long-Term Pollutant Reduction			X
Habitat/Stream Protection			X
Ease of Application	Difficult	Average	Easy
Installation		X	
Maintenance			X

## Limitations

- Sites with excessively steep slopes
- Small sites for some techniques



Left: Leave trees and native vegetation in place outside building areas.



Find more construction site educational materials at:

[cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit](http://cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit)



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